

Administration of Barack Obama, 2012

Remarks at a Campaign Rally in Jacksonville, Florida
July 19, 2012

The President. Hello, Florida! Oh, it is good to be back in Jacksonville, Florida!

A couple people I just want to say thank you to: first of all, please give Don Herrin a big round of applause for the introduction. One of our outstanding Members of Congress, your own Corrine Brown is here. Another great member of the Florida delegation, Ted Deutch is here. And Congresswoman and chair of the Democratic National Committee, Debbie Wasserman Schultz is in the house.

And all of you are here. And I'm happy about that.

I'm sorry we were a little delayed—had some weather issues. Even Air Force One has to fly around the thunder. *[Laughter]* But we are so glad to be back. And I want to thank all of you for being here.

Audience member. I love you!

The President. I love you back. That's why I came.

Now, Jacksonville, this is my last political campaign.

Audience members. No!

The President. It's true. I'm term limited. *[Laughter]* And since it's my last campaign, it got me thinking about my first political campaigns, early on, back when I had no gray hair. *[Laughter]* And when I was running for the State senate or I was running for the United States Senate in Illinois, Illinois is a big State like Florida, and we'd have to travel across the State, and I didn't have Air Force One back then. *[Laughter]* No Marine One. So I didn't even have GPS. *[Laughter]* So I'd be driving; maybe I'd have one staff person in the car. And since we didn't have MapQuest, I had to have a map, and I'd fold it, and then, I'd try to unfold it and fold it back the way it was, and I'd get it all messed up. And I'd get lost, and then, once I got to an event, I'd have to find parking, and sometimes, I couldn't find a parking spot, or I'd get rained on.

But I have such fond memories of those early campaigns because, no matter where I went, no matter what community—inner-city, rural town, meeting with Black folks, white folks, Latinos, Asians, Native Americans—didn't matter what background people came from, no matter how much they looked different on the surface, there was a common thread to all the stories that I heard as I traveled around the State.

I'd meet an elderly couple, and they'd remind me of my grandparents. I'd think about my grandfather who fought in Patton's army in World War II, my grandmother working on a bomber assembly line while he was gone. And when he came back, he was rewarded with a chance to go to college on the GI bill. They were able to buy their first home with an FHA loan. And I'd think about the journey that they had traveled and everything that that greatest generation had done to build America.

Or I'd meet a middle class couple, and I'd think about Michelle's parents, especially her dad, who had multiple sclerosis, so by the time I met him, he could barely walk, had to use two canes, had to wake up an hour earlier than everybody else to get to work because that's how

long it took to get him dressed, but would not miss a day of work. And I'd think about Michelle's mom, who ended up working as a secretary for most of her life and how, despite the fact that they never had a lot, they were able to give Michelle and Michelle's brother the best education possible, and how remarkable that was, this country that we live in.

And then I'd meet a single mom and I'd think about my own mother, who raised my sister and me, with the help of my grandparents, because my dad left when I was a baby. And my mom didn't have a lot of money, but she worked hard and she went to school at the same time so that she could give her two children the best education possible and they could travel on a path that she couldn't have even imagined.

So the people I met in that first campaign and every campaign since, they had all kinds of different stories, all kinds of different backgrounds; they were young and old and every race and every faith—gay, straight, Democrat, Republican, Independent—but all of them shared the belief in that core American experience, that basic idea, that core bargain that makes us the shining example for the world: the idea that no matter where you come from, no matter who you are, no matter what you look like, America is a place where you can make it if you try.

As Americans, we don't expect handouts, but we expect hard work to pay off. We understand there will be setbacks, but we also know that responsibility should be rewarded. We believe that if you put enough effort into it, enough elbow grease into it, you should be able to find a job that pays the bills, you should be able to have a home that you call your own, health care that you can count on if you get sick. You should be able to retire with dignity and respect. You should be able to provide your children with an education that gives them an even better shot than you had. That's what we believe.

Jacksonville, we are here today because we recognize that this basic bargain, this essence of who we are as a people, this simple American Dream is at risk like never before. For more than a decade, it had been slipping away from too many hard-working people. Jobs and factories were shipped overseas. Folks at the top were doing better than ever before, but middle class families saw their paychecks get smaller even as their bills got bigger. In Washington, the trillions that were spent on two wars and two tax cuts took us from record surpluses to record deficits. And on Wall Street, a culture of anything goes led to the worst economic crisis and financial crisis since the Great Depression.

Now, ever since I first ran for this office, I've said it's going to take more than 1 year or one term or maybe even one President to restore the dream that built this country. And the financial crisis and economic crisis made our job that much harder. But I don't get discouraged, because the cynics who say that our best days are behind us, they haven't witnessed the everyday courage and the essential character of the American people.

They haven't met the small business owners in Minnesota who chose to sacrifice some of their own perks, some of their own pay, to avoid laying off a single worker during that recession. They haven't been to the auto companies in Michigan and Ohio that were never supposed to build another car again, but now they can't build them fast enough.

They haven't talked to the 55-year-old factory worker from North Carolina who decided that when the furniture industry left town she'd get her degree in biotechnology from the local community college, not just because she hopes it gets her a job, but because she hopes it tells her children, you don't give up on your dreams. That's the character I've seen in the American people. That's who we are.

There are no easy fixes, no quick solutions to the challenges we face, but there is no doubt in my mind that we have the capacity to meet them and we will meet them. We've got the best workers in the world and the best entrepreneurs in the world and the best scientists in the world and the best researchers and the best colleges and the best universities. We're a young nation with the greatest diversity and talent and ingenuity from every corner of the globe. And Florida knows something about that. No matter what the naysayers tell us, there is not a country on Earth that would not happily trade places with the United States of America.

So the problem—what's standing in our way is not technical solutions to the problems of housing or education or dealing with the debt. We know how to deal with it. What's standing in our way is our politics.

Audience members. Yes!

The President. It's what's going on in Washington. It's the notion that compromise is a bad word, the notion that the only path forward is going backwards to the same top-down economics that got us into this mess in the first place.

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Our opponent's entire plan—the same plan of his allies in Congress—is to cut more taxes for the wealthy, cut more regulations for banks and insurance companies, cut more investments in things like education and research——

Audience members. Boo!

The President. ——all with the hope that somehow that will create jobs and prosperity everywhere. That's what Mitt Romney believes. That's what folks in his party in Washington believe. But you know what, Florida, that's not what you and I believe.

Audience members. No!

The President. That's not what most Americans believe, no matter what party you belong to, because this country was not built on top-down economics. This country was built from the middle class out. It was built from the bottom up. That's how we became the most prosperous nation in the history of the world. That's the path you can choose for America in this election. And that is why I am running for a second term as President of the United States of America.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. I am running because, like you, I believe you cannot reduce the deficit and deal with our debt without asking folks like me, without asking the wealthiest Americans, to give up the taxes they've been getting for the last decade.

Now, my opponent doesn't just want to keep these tax cuts, he wants to cut those taxes by another \$5 trillion, including a 25-percent tax cut for every millionaire in the country.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. Now, hold on, it gets better. [*Laughter*] To pay for this, he plans to gut things like job training and financial aid for college and potentially raise taxes on the middle class, on you.

Audience members. No!

The President. He plans to roll back health care reform, forcing more than 200,000 Floridians to pay more for their prescription drugs. He plans to turn Medicare into a voucher program.

Audience members. No!

The President. So if that voucher isn't worth enough to buy the health insurance that's on the market, you're out of luck. You're on your own. One independent nonpartisan study found that seniors would have to pay nearly \$6,400 more for Medicare than they do today.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. Now, Florida, that's the wrong way to go. It's wrong to ask seniors to pay more for Medicare just so millionaires and billionaires can pay less in taxes. That's not the way to reduce the deficit. We shouldn't be squeezing more money out of seniors who are just barely getting by right now.

My plan is to squeeze more money out of the health care system by eliminating waste and going after abuse and fraud in Medicare. We can cut back Government spending that we can't afford, but I will also ask anybody who is making over \$250,000 a year to just go back to the rates they were paying under Bill Clinton, because, by the way, that worked. Nearly 23 million new jobs were created, the largest budget surplus in our history. And when we were doing it that way, where the burden was shared, actually, millionaires did really well.

That's the choice we have in this election. That's why I'm running for a second term as President.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. There is such a contrast in approach, two fundamentally different visions that you're going to have to choose from in this election.

When the American auto industry was on the brink of collapse, more than 1 million jobs on the line, Governor Romney said let's "let Detroit go bankrupt."

Audience members. No!

The President. I refused to turn my back on a great industry and on American workers. I bet on American workers. I bet on American manufacturing. And 3 years later, the American auto industry has come roaring back.

So I want to make sure that the high-tech manufacturing jobs of tomorrow—not just in the auto industry, but in every industry—that those advanced manufacturing jobs are taking root not in China, not in Germany, but in Jacksonville and in Cleveland and in Raleigh and in Richmond.

Governor Romney's experience has been owning companies that were called "pioneers" in the business of outsourcing, wants to give tax breaks to companies that ship jobs overseas. I want to give tax breaks to companies that are investing here in the United States, rewarding companies that are investing here and hiring American workers, so we can sell products around the world stamped with three proud words: Made in America. That's why I'm running.

I'm running because in 2008, I promised to end the war in Iraq, and thanks to our outstanding men and women in uniform, we kept that promise. It's time to do some nation-building here at home. America is safer and more respected because of the selflessness of our troops. So not only did we end the war in Iraq, we've been able to go after Al Qaida and get bin

Laden. We have set a timeline to end the war in Afghanistan. And as long as I'm Commander in Chief, this country will care for our veterans and serve our veterans as well as they've served us. Nobody who fights for this country should have to fight for a job or a roof over their heads when they come home.

So my plan would take about half the money that we're no longer spending on war and use that to pay down the deficit, use the other half to put people back to work rebuilding our roads, our bridges, our runways, our ports, wireless networks.

I want to create a veterans job corps, so we can put our returning heroes back to work as cops and firefighters in communities that need them. That's the America we want to build. That's the choice in this election. And that's why I'm running for a second term as President of the United States.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. I'm running to make sure that America once again leads the world in educating our kids and training our workers. I want to help our schools hire and reward the best teachers, especially in math and science.

Let's give 2 million more Americans the chance to go to community colleges and learn the skills that local businesses are looking for right now. Let's work with colleges and universities to bring down the cost of tuition once and for all. In the 21st century, higher education isn't a luxury, it's a necessity that every American should be able to afford.

On every measure, there's a difference in this election. My opponent has a plan to help responsible homeowners by letting the housing market hit bottom.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. That isn't a solution, that's a problem. We've already helped more than a million responsible homeowners refinance their mortgages. And now I want to give everybody the chance to refinance and save \$3,000 a year. That's a plan for housing. That's the choice in this election.

I'm running because I believe nobody in America should go broke just because they get sick. And because we passed the health care law, we are going to realize that goal. The Supreme Court has spoken. We are moving forward. We are going to help people who are working hard to make sure that just because they have an illness in their family, they don't lose everything.

And by the way, if you've already got health insurance, this just gives you the guarantee and security when you're dealing with your insurance company that they won't jerk you around because of the fine print. And it lets your young—it lets young people stay on their parent's plan until they're 26 years old. And it helps our seniors reduce their prescription drug costs. We're not going to roll that back. We're not going to refight that fight for the next 4 years. We need to move forwards, not backwards.

Just like we're not going to refight the issue of whether you can serve the country you love just—depending on who you love. We ended "don't ask, don't tell." It was the right thing to do. We're not going back and having that fight. We need to move forward.

We need to make sure that women have control over their own health care decisions. We're not going backwards. We're moving forward.

All these issues connect. Whether it's bringing manufacturing and construction jobs back, or protecting your health care, or making sure our kids are getting the best education, making sure our veterans are getting the care that they have earned—all these things make up a middle class life. They're all central to the idea that made this country great, that promise that if you work hard, you can get ahead.

It's the same promise our parents and grandparents passed down to all of us, the promise we have to pass down to our kids and our grandkids: the idea that we work hard, that everybody has got to take responsibility, that Government can't solve every problem and it certainly can't solve problems if you don't want to help yourself. But we also know there are some things we do better together, that we rise or fall as one Nation and as one people.

Over the course of the next 4 months, the other side will spend more money than we have ever seen in our lifetimes on ads that tell you the same thing you've been hearing for months. They know their plan isn't going to sell, so all they'll keep doing is saying, the economy is not where it should be and it's all Obama's fault.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. That's basically their message. Now, I guess that's a plan to win an election, but they can't hide the fact that it's not a plan to create jobs. It's not a plan to grow the economy. So they don't have a plan to revive the middle class. Everything they're proposing we tried for a decade, and it didn't work.

So they don't have a plan, and I do. And, Florida, I've been outspent before, and I've been counted out before, but through every campaign, what has always given me hope is the American people. You have the ability to cut through all that nonsense. What gives me hope is that you remember the stories of families just like mine, all the struggles of parents and great-grandparents—and some folks coming here as immigrants, some brought here in chains, some working on the farm, some working in the mines or on the mills—they didn't know what to expect, but they understood that there was something different about this country. They knew that this was a country where things might not be perfect, but working together, we could perfect our Union; where people were free to pursue their own individual dreams, but still come together as neighbors, as friends, as one American family.

They knew that being middle class wasn't about how much you had in your bank account, it was about the security of knowing you could take care of your family and give your kids the chance to pursue the life that they dream of and the chance to give something back to this country that gave you so much.

And when we tap into that spirit, when we push aside all the talk and all the politics and get down to that core of what it means to be American, all that money doesn't matter. All those negative ads don't matter. When you come together, you cannot be stopped. And so you can still make change happen, Florida. You can still inspire each other, because you inspire me.

In 2008, I tried to only make promises that I could keep or work on keeping. And I told you then I was not a perfect man and I wouldn't be a perfect President, but I also told you I'd always tell you what I thought, I'd always tell you where I stood, and most of all, I would wake up every single day and spend every waking hour thinking about you, fighting as hard as I knew how for you.

Because I see myself in you. Your grandparents remind me of my grandparents. When I see your kids, I think about my kids. And so I have kept that promise, Florida. I've been fighting for you, and I keep believing in you.

And now I am asking for your vote, not just for me, but for the country that we believe in together. And if you still believe, and if you're willing to stand up with me and knock on doors for me and make phone calls for me, talk to your neighbors and talk to your friends, talk to your coworkers, talk to your family, we will win Florida, and we will win this election. We'll finish what we started in 2008, and we will remind the world just why it is that the United States of America is the greatest nation on Earth.

God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:12 p.m. at the Prime F. Osborn Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to U.S. Navy veteran Don Herrin; and Republican Presidential candidate former Gov. W. Mitt Romney of Massachusetts. He also referred to his sister Maya Soetoro-Ng, his mother-in-law Marian Robinson, and his brother-in-law Craig M. Robinson.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Campaign rallies :: Jacksonville, FL.

Locations: Jacksonville, FL.

Names: Brown, Corrine; Clinton, William J.; Deutch, Theodore E.; Herrin, Don; Obama, Michelle; Robinson, Craig M.; Robinson, Marian; Romney, W. Mitt; Soetoro-Ng, Maya; Wasserman Schultz, Deborah.

Subjects: Afghanistan : U.S. military forces :: Deployment; Armed Forces, U.S. : "Don't ask, don't tell" policy, repeal; Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: Service and dedication; Budget, Federal : Deficit and national debt; Business and industry : Manufacturing industry :: Strengthening efforts; Economy, national : Economic concerns; Economy, national : Household incomes, decline ; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Education : Community colleges; Education : Global competitiveness; Education : Postsecondary education :: Affordability; Education : Science and math programs ; Education : Teachers; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Florida : Democratic Party events; Florida ; President's visits; Health and medical care : Cost control reforms ; Health and medical care : Health insurance reforms; Health and medical care : Medicare and Medicaid; Housing : Mortgage refinancing programs; Iraq : U.S. and coalition forces, withdrawal; Taxation : Tax cuts, budgetary effects; Terrorism : Al Qaida terrorist group ; Transportation : Infrastructure, national, improvement efforts; Veterans : Hiring incentives; Veterans : Job training and education assistance.

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